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ABSTRACT

A basic concept in reading content in the social studies is for pupils to experience adequate background information. A pupil cannot read and understand new subject matter unless prerequisites have been met. For early primary grade pupils, the Big Book concept may be used, wherein the teacher discusses the illustration in the book pertaining to content that will be read. Intermediate grade pupils may also be taught by the teacher using a similar strategy. The social studies teacher needs to have numerous library books, on different reading levels, available for pupils to select from and read relevant to the social studies unit being taught. Pupils may also access necessary data through the Internet. Social studies teachers should be teachers of reading because pupils need to: (1) do much reading to secure information for each unit taught; (2) read to follow directions; (3) read sequentially a narrative account in social studies since, after reading, proper order is very important in retelling these events; (4) skim subject matter content to note if it is relevant; (5) scan materials that provide what one is looking for; (6) develop main ideas; (7) read to achieve a summary; (8) read diary entries; (9) read in an analytical manner; (10) read in an imaginative manner; and (11) read for problem solving purposes. The theory of multiple intelligences is important in educational practices when having pupils reveal in diverse ways what has been learned. (Contains 14 references.) (CR)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

READING IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

ED 423 519

Being able to read well is a must in the social studies as well as in other curriculum areas. Most social studies teachers stress a considerable amount of reading that pupils need to do in ongoing lessons and units of study. It is true that there are additional kinds of learning activities, and a variety of learning opportunities should be in the offing so that all pupils may learn as much as possible. Reading is one way and a good approach to learn in the social studies. There are certain ingredients in teaching that will assist pupils to improve reading skills in the social studies. Each pupil needs to be a successful learner. Improved self concepts develop as a result of achieving success in ongoing lessons and units of study. Pupils individually desire to be recognized for what has been done well. Certainly, reading in the social studies can offer pupils rich and satisfying experiences in learning. The talents of each pupil need to be recognized, reading being no exception. How might a successful program of reading be emphasized for all pupils? (See Ediger, 1997, 93-97).

Readiness for Reading

A basic in reading content in the social studies is for pupils to experience adequate background information. A pupil cannot read and understand new subject matter unless prerequisites have been met. The social studies teacher, as a professional, helps pupils attach meaning to the new content to be read. He/she is aware of subject matter pupils should understand before they are to read to achieve new objectives.

There are numerous methods the teacher may use to provide guidance and assistance in establishing readiness within pupils for reading. For early primary grade pupils, the Big Book concept may be used. Here, the teacher discusses the illustration in the book pertaining to content that will be read, the goal being to provide background information within pupils. First, the teacher reads orally from the Big Book that has print large enough for all to see in the classroom. Learners look at the words as the teacher reads orally. Pupils then may recognize the new words in context as well as receive additional background information. Next, the pupils read together with the teacher in an oral manner. Pupils have additional opportunities here to recognize the new words as well as review the content read. Rereading aloud may occur, if desired or if needed. Using the Big Book approach, pupils need not divide their attention from reading the content as well as seeing the new words in print. Holism is then involved in reading social studies subject matter. Each phase in using the Big Book needs to be emphasized, such as the teacher discussing with pupils the illustrations

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therein, prior to the former reading it aloud with learners. Pupils then follow the sequential words in context as the oral reading progresses. Pupils reading aloud together with the teacher provides additional opportunities to recognize the new words as well as achieve background information. With a second cooperative oral reading, involving pupils with the teacher, there are additional chances to review the words in identification as well as the content read. Rereading provides further opportunities to polish reading skills and rehearse knowledge for the early primary grade pupils in the social studies (Ediger, 1998, 94-95).

The Big Book philosophy has merits for intermediate grade pupils who face problems in word recognition and comprehension when textbooks are used. Comprehension goes downhill as fewer and fewer words are identified in reading content. Prior to the reading aloud activity, pupils may discuss the illustrations in the text to obtain background information. A good reader may then read aloud to those who lack proficiency in securing ideas from reading. Each of the latter may follow along in his/her own social studies textbook as the subject matter is read aloud. Word recognition problems are minimized greatly as a good reader reads aloud to those who need assistance. Rereading might be emphasized as is necessary. Pupils may then be ready to discuss the subject matter read with others in the classroom setting.

Intermediate grade pupils may also be taught by the teacher using the following strategy to assist in providing readiness for reading:

1. discuss the content in the illustrations with pupils in the classroom.
2. print words that pupils will meet in the basal in neat manuscript style on the chalkboard, generally within context in a sentence. If a word processor is available with a large screen or monitor, the teacher may type in the new words into the computer for all pupils to see.
3. point to each word when pronounced orally with pupil involvement.
4. go over these words, such as in step three, several times until mastered by learners. Assist pupils to use each word in a meaningful sentence.
5. have questions or purposes for reading whereby learners need to read to obtain answers for each.
6. discuss answers and other content in a discussion, following the silent reading experience (Ediger, 1988, 21-22).

In these six flexible steps of instruction pertaining to readiness and the actual act of reading, a few pupils may experience a separation of the new words to be mastered that will appear in the text and are printed on the chalkboard with the subject matter to be read silently. However, this problem may be minimized as the reading activity progresses. The six steps of readiness for reading in the social studies listed above might

also be used for oral reading. Certainly, selected pupils, as a whole, might well become successful in comprehension by using this procedure in teaching. Each pupil needs to achieve as optimally as possible in the social studies.

Individualized Reading in the Social Studies

The social studies teacher needs to have numerous library books available for pupils to select from and read. Empowerment of pupils is important so that they feel more confident in learning and in achievement. If pupils can choose, from among alternatives, which library books to read sequentially, they, no doubt, will pick those which may be of most benefit personally. The library books need to be on different reading levels so each pupil may choose a challenging book to read. Learners individually should not feel frustrated with content that is too difficult, nor bored with those that are too easy. The library books for pupils to read should be on different topics, but relate directly to the social studies unit presently being taught. Thus, if a thematic unit on transportation is being taught, there need to be library books for pupils to choose from on the following topics:

1. history of transportation
2. transportation in developing nations.
3. transportation as related to geography and geographical regions.
4. rules and laws pertaining to transportation.
5. vocations available in the field of transportation.
6. different forms of transportation available.
7. transportation and its relationship to communication.
8. transportation and the world of business.
9. problems in transportation.
10. safety and transportation.

With internet and the world wide web being available to an increasing number of schools, pupils may access necessary data using computers. The information sought needs to relate to the thematic unit being studied. Critical thinking should be stressed in that pupils separate the relevant from the irrelevant, the accurate from the inaccurate, and factual from that which is imaginary. Creative thinking is important in that learners might use content learned to write diverse forms of poetry and complete unique works of art as these relate to the thematic unit being studied. Problem solving also should receive adequate attention in teaching in that pupils individually or in committees identify a problem within the thematic social studies unit, secure information in developing an hypothesis/answer.

With individualized selection of library books related to the thematic unit being studied, pupils may contribute what has been read

in discussions conducted within unit teaching framework. I have observed this approach to work well with no basal textbook used in teaching and learning. Pupils actively participate in the discussion when bringing in to the discussion subject matter read from the completed library book. There can be much enthusiasm here with diversity of content presented, but all being directly appropriate for the thematic unit being taught. A lively, purposeful discussion may be held in an atmosphere of respect.

The teacher needs to evaluate which pupils benefit much from individualized reading in the social studies and which benefit more from the basal. It is the pupil that needs to do the learning to achieve vital objectives in the social studies. Pupils then need to have a voice pertaining to which reading materials are most beneficial. With library books, a related cassette may play the recorded words and sentences as individual pupils, with reading problems, follow along, silently or orally. It is best to use a variety of reading materials so that pupils may check one source against the other, critically and creatively (Ediger, 1996, 229-233).

Phonics and the Social Studies Teacher

An important question in teaching social studies involves the degree to which the teacher needs to be a teacher of reading. I would say definitely that social studies teachers should be teachers of reading. Why? Pupils need to do much reading to secure information for each unit taught. There will be additional concrete and semiconcrete experiences that pupils will have in each unit of study. Reading is not the only avenue of learning, but it is a vital approach in information acquisition in school and in society (Ediger,1988, 1-6)

When being a teacher for two years on the West Bank of the Jordan from 1952-1954 and also helping to distribute clothing to Palestinian refugees on the West and East Bank-- both were the nation of Jordan at that time, I saw bedouins getting off the bus between Jerusalem and Jericho, walking along a path to their tentative community of tents and livestock. These nomads could not read or write. Nomadic life tends to be harsh where less than five inches of rain falls per year in a desert region. The grass soon withers and is gone in a region/area. Bedouins then move on to where the grass is more adequate for their camels, sheep, and goats (Ediger, 1998, 1-10). Now, the nation of Jordan is doing much to educate bedouin children. For example, in southern Jordan, bedouin children are bussed long distances to school. There is a new school for bedouin children and for others, near Aqaba in the southern tip of the nation of Jordan.

What I am saying is that people lose out on much when being completely or nearly illiterate. Not being able to read or write when so many jobs here and abroad require quality reading skills and abilities is

a disaster. Then too, reading for enjoyment is vital for each person. We live in the country, five miles from the city of Kirksville. A neighbor located next to us cannot read or write. Not only are good jobs difficult to obtain without these skills, but enjoyment in life for leisure type activities are hindered without the ability to read well. Presently in the United States, an illiterate person appears to be one who reads below the tenth grade level. One can do much, much reading of different kinds of content on the tenth grade level of graded subject matter!

Social studies teachers then need to be quality teachers of reading so that pupils may obtain adequate subject matter and skills from the unit being taught. There are pupils who are hindered in reading due to a lack of phonics skills. Phonics should only be taught to pupils who cannot benefit from reading due to lacking word attack skills to unlock the unknown. Phonics should not be taught for the sake of teaching sound/symbol relationships, but a purpose is involved and that reason being to assist pupils to improve in reading comprehension in the social studies. If a pupil cannot recognize a word while reading, he/she should attempt to use context clues to identify that word. If context skills do not work, then attempting to associate a sound with an initial symbol in the unknown word might well be adequate. Additional phonic skills to be taught include final consonant sounds as related to individual as well as a combination of letters. Medial vowel sounds may also be taught as needed. The social studies teacher sets the stage for pupils to achieve vital knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives. To achieve these objectives, pupils need assistance when reading is being emphasized as a learning opportunity related to relevant ends in unit teaching. Phonics, many times, can be taught as needed, not as an isolated skill. When feasible, I recommend this approach.

There are selected syllabication skills that might be taught to pupils to unlock unknown words. These syllables need to be important and are frequently used in reading content. For example, the syllable "un" appears in many words with rather high frequency, such as in unimportant, unfit, unreliable, unable, and unlikely. Pupils need help, in certain situations, to identify and pronounce words correctly due to syllables which are prefixes, such as "un." Common syllables as suffixes may also cause problems for pupils in recognizing unknown words. Pupils may need guidance in recognizing words containing suffixes, such as "ful" in cupful and roomful, among other words (See Ediger,1997,18-27).

Reading for a Variety of Purposes

There are numerous kinds of reading materials that pupils need to read proficiently presently as well as in the future at the work place. Reading subject matter content, narrative content, and creative ideas require reading for a variety of purposes. The social studies teacher

should assist pupils to read for diverse purposes or reasons. I will now discuss different, relevant purposes in reading.

Pupils should become proficient in reading for facts in the social studies. There are many facts that are relevant for pupils to know in the social studies. For example in a social studies unit on the Middle Ages, learners may read and recall meaningfully, the following facts:

1. many people lived on a manor.
2. the manor was a farm owned by a lord.
3. peasants performed the difficult work on the manor.
4. the lord usually lived in a cattle, surrounded by a moat.
5. the parish church was at the center of life on a manor.

It is vital that pupils understand subject matter in each fact. Too often, facts are memorized for a test and then, perhaps, forgotten. This is most unfortunate.

A second purpose in reading social studies content is to read to follow directions. Many pupils fail to follow directions and thus do not complete an exercise or activity correctly. In society, we are asked to provide directions to a place by a stranger, These directions need to be given clearly and concisely. Pupils should have ample opportunities to learn to read and follow directions carefully. The directions may pertain to doing a work book exercise, completing a model, engaging in an art project, and/or taking a test. Pupils should read the directions carefully and then explain, at selected intervals, what they are to do. In many cases, the directions follow a definite order or sequence. Thus, step one comes first, then step two, followed by step there, and so on. Fluent reading is generally necessary to do an activity correctly from directions given (Ediger, 1991, 180-181).

A third purpose or reason for reading is for pupils to read sequentially a narrative account in social studies. After reading, proper order is very important in retelling these events. Otherwise, the narrative account may not make sense. For example, the order of presidents in the United States follow a specific sequence. The first president being George Washington and the last one being the present president. Naming the states in the union by dates when becoming a state requires a certain order in their listing. In problem solving, pupils first select a problem. Next, information is gathered in answer to the problem. An hypothesis is then developed which is tentative. More information is necessary to test the hypothesis in a realistic situation. The original hypothesis might then be revised and a new one developed. There appears to be a certain order to follow when engaging in problem solving in the social studies. Certainly, the pupil could not begin with an hypothesis since there would be no problem for which an hypothesis is needed. Thus, there is a certain order that needs to be followed in doing problem solving activities.

A fourth purpose in reading is to skim subject matter content to note if it is relevant. When looking for proper nouns, subject matter may be skimmed and not every word read on a page. Proper nouns begin with capital letters, always. Common nouns begin with lower case letters unless they begin a new sentence. As a further need for skimming when reading in the social studies, the pupil may skim to secure names, dates, and places in order to answer questions. Names do begin with capital letters as a distinguishing feature. Dates are numerals and do stick out in context. Places, such as cities, states, nations, and countries have capital letters for the beginning letter of each word. Thus, there are distinguishing characteristics when skimming subject matter which provides assistance in locating desired information. In using the index to a social studies text or reference book, the pupil does not read every entry, but quickly skims the entries until the needed one is found. When viewing the table of contents in a reference book, the pupil skims the chapter titles until the one necessary is located. Sometimes, of course, the reference book does not show materials in the table of contents that are needed, so the pupil must look in the index section to notice if needed entries are there.

A fifth purpose in reading social studies content is to scan materials that provide what one is looking for. For example, the pupil might scan the chapter titles, the topic headings, the subtopics, and the words in italics to notice if the desired content is there for an assignment. Not every word is read by any means, but the content being searched for is being scanned to see if the salient ideas are there. Once the salient ideas are noticed through scanning, the pupil may read further to notice if the content is relevant. Scanning as a skill in reading has many benefits to the learner. The pupil then scans until vital subject matter being looked for is in the offing.

A sixth purpose in pupil reading is to develop main ideas. In the development of main ideas, pupils indicate in one sentence what has been read, covering several pages on the intermediate grade level, as am example. Many pupils on that grade level, as well as adults, find this difficult to do. The main idea expressed truly needs to cover, in general, what was printed on the several pages. Thus the main idea is general and covers considerable content in print form. The main idea con be checked by having pupils give supporting details. These details need to support the main idea to be valid. I have noticed in classrooms, where I supervised student teachers and cooperating teachers, that pupils tend to provide partial main ideas. Thus the main idea given does not hold water, so to speak.

A seventh purpose in reading social studies content is to have pupils read to achieve a summary. Here, the reading activity must lead pupils to draw conclusions covering that which has been read. The conclusion needs to cover what is vital and relevant in content read.

Summarizing is a complex act of reading. Pupils then need to relate ideas and finalize the subject matter with concluding statements. Summarizations cover previous content read emphasizing relationship of significant ideas. A summary may be appraised in terms of having adequate supporting ideas from what has been studied in an ongoing unit of study in the social studies. Reading and writing certainly are related to each other. When pupils write, they must have content to write about. Reading social studies subject matter might well provide the content for summary statements. As the summary is written, pupils in a committee may debate what is relevant and what is irrelevant to record. Paper and pencil may be used. I have observed schools, when supervising student others and cooperating teachers, where the word processor is used. Generally, on the intermediate grade levels, there are learners who are proficient in using the word processor to type the summary. If not, the teacher may do the typing as the content is provided by learners in a collaborative setting. Revising the rough draft may also be stressed. Pupils need to realize that quality work should be in the offing in all that is done. Writing summaries of what has been acquired in social studies is no exception. Much reading is required before, during, and after writing the summary statements.

When reading and writing summaries, pupils need to be able to identify words correctly and attach meaning to what has been written. Meaning theory is salient to stress in reading in the social studies (Ediger, 1997, 104-107).

An eighth purpose involves reading diary entries. Many pupils do write diaries at home, but do not maintain writing these entries for an extended period of time. I suggest that pupils individually or collaboratively write diary entries pertaining to what has been learned on a daily basis in the social studies. The entries are dated. Taking turns in writing these diary entries avoids boredom and sameness in learning opportunities pursued. Reading and writing are interrelated. Revising and modifying what has been written will be in the offing. If done collaboratively, team work is very important. The talents of each pupil need to be used with no one left out or shunned. Each pupil should feel that he/she belongs to the group and is accepted as a human being having much worth. Recognizing the talents of each participant is important so that esteem needs are being met. Individuals like to have belonging and esteem needs met. It certainly is an uncomfortable feeling to be minimized and not being able to participate actively in an ongoing learning activity. Important items need to be recorded, such as excursions taken and fascinating learning opportunities in the classroom (Ediger, 1997,188-190).

A ninth purpose involves reading in an analytical manner. Here, the pupil with teacher guidance divides into component parts what has been read to view each facet with a skeptical attitude. The learner needs

to separate the accurate from the inaccurate, the factual from fantasy, and the parts from the whole. Evaluation of the components needs to be thoroughly assessed. After the inaccurate has been separated, for example, from the accurate, the pupil is in a better position to use what has been learned. The pupil then has taken apart the whole and examined meaningfully what is accurate so that it may be better understood.

A tenth purpose for reading is to read in an imaginative manner. Pupils with teacher guidance need to come up with new ideas. New arrangements may be made of the previously acquired content. Novel ideas may come forth which are used to provide background information to write creative prose and poetry.

An eleventh reason for reading in the social studies is to read for problem solving purposes. If the problem pertains to appraising the worth of a given written product, criteria for the appraisal need to be developed. The learner should be heavily involved in writing each criterion. The problem was to write criteria for the appraisal and this involves higher levels of cognition. When evaluating the worth of each criterion for evaluation, pupils with teacher guidance brainstorming the values of each.

Thinking, Multiple Intelligences, and Reading in the Social Studies

Sternberg (1997) determined levels of thought for pupils to exhibit in learning. For social studies, Sternberg indicated the following, as an example:

Memory. Remember a list of the factors that led to the Civil War.
Analysis. Compare, contrast, and evaluate the arguments of those who favored slavery versus those who opposed it.
Creativity. Write a page of a journal from the viewpoint of a soldier fighting for one side or the other side of the Civil War.
Practicality. Discuss the applicability of lessons from the Civil War to countries today that have strong internal divisions, such as the former Yugoslavia.

The social studies teacher may use the above model to have pupils think on different levels of complexity, such as memory, analysis, creativity, and practicality.

The theory of multiple intelligences is important in educational practices when having pupils reveal in diverse ways what has been learned. Pupils might then reveal what has been learned, not through testing only, but also through seven intelligences identified by Gardner (1993). These intelligences are the following:

1. verbal/linguistic such as in reading and writing.
2. logical/mathematical.
3. visual/spatial.

4. musical.
5. bodily/kinesthetic.
6. interpersonal.
7. intrapersonal.

Thus, there are numerous ways to reveal what has been learned in social studies. For example number one intelligence above--verbal/linguistic-- the pupils may show content learned through the writing of related prose and poetry. Number three above--visual/spatial--pupils might want to indicate subject matter learned through art products and projects (See Ediger, 1996, 101-103). With multiple intelligences theory, the door has been opened to pupils in using talents and skills to show to others depth and breath of leaning in ongoing lessons and units of study.

Conclusion

There are numerous skills and abilities involved in teaching when producing quality readers in the social studies. Reading, as one learning activity, needs to be emphasized since it is a highly useful skill presently in the curriculum as well as in the future work place. Pupils then need to learn word recognition skills, such as phonics and syllabication. Contextual clues also are valuable to use to identify unknown words. Different plans in reading subject matter exist and these need to be adapted to each learner's potential in learning to read proficiently. Individualized reading, shared reading, experience charts, and use of basal, among other recommendable procedures, are excellent to use providing pupils benefit as optimally a possible from the procedure used. The learning style of the individual pupil is important to use as a basis for determining under which conditions pupils learn best in the social studies. For example, selected pupils learn best on an individual basis whereas others achieve more optimally in group or collaborative settings. The teacher's position is complex indeed with research data coming out continuously to assist in teaching pupils to learn as much as possible (Ediger, 1998, 137-144).

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